



**A few words
from State
Superintendent
of Schools
Lillian M.
Lowery**

We have the nation's best teachers, and it is great when national organizations recognize this. For the fourth time since 2006, a Maryland public school teacher has been named a finalist for National Teacher of the Year.

Maryland Teacher of the Year Sean McComb, an educator at Patapsco High School & Center for the Arts in Baltimore County, this month was named one of four finalists for the 2014 National Teacher of the Year. McComb, named Maryland Teacher of the Year last October, is a teacher in Patapsco's Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) program, helping students strengthen their work habits and academic skills.

There are more than 7.2 million teachers in the U.S., and more 60,000 in Maryland public schools alone, which puts Sean's accomplishment in perspective. His passion for his students and his belief in their success is emblematic of educators in our State.

Maryland has had a remarkable run of success in the National Teacher of the Year program. The three other Maryland finalists for National Teacher of the Year in recent years were Montgomery County kindergarten teacher Kimberly Oliver Burnim in 2006, Frederick County chemistry teacher Michelle Shearer in 2011, and Cecil County English teacher Rhonda Holmes-Blankenship last year. Burnim and Shearer were later named National Teacher of the Year.

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By now you know that *Education Week* this year decided against publishing an overall ranking of states. The publication is revamping its annual "Quality Counts" research.

MARYLAND STATE BOARD APPROVES DISCIPLINE REGS

The Maryland State Board of Education this week adopted new regulations guiding student discipline. The regulations are designed to keep students in school and maintain progress toward graduation, while strengthening school safety.



Board member James DeGraffenreidt, who served as State Board President four years ago when the State Board began its study of student discipline, moves approval of the new regulations.

The vote was 10-0 with one abstention and one board member absent.

The regulations require local school systems to adopt policies that reduce long-term out-of-school suspensions and expulsions, and use such actions only when a student poses an imminent threat of serious harm to other

students or staff, or when a student is engaged in chronic or extreme disruptive behavior.

In addition, the regulations seek to expedite the student discipline appeal process by allowing local boards of education to hear and decide school discipline appeals with an opportunity to extend that time period in complex cases.

"Safe schools grow out of a positive school climate," said State Board President Charlene M. Dukes. "Maryland is dedicated to maintaining safety while increasing student achievement. In order for students to achieve success, they must be in school."

The regulations also seek to eliminate the disproportionate impact of school discipline on students of color and students with disabilities. MSDE

In the meantime, Maryland continues to rank high in the report. Maryland's grades in the newly updated categories are: B in Chance for Success (eighth in the nation); B in K-12 Achievement (second in the nation); and B for School Finance (eighth in the nation). In the categories not updated this year, Maryland schools had received a B+ for Standards, Assessments and Accountability (23rd in the nation in 2012); an A for Transitions and Alignment (second in the nation in 2013), and a B for Teaching Profession (third in the nation in 2012.)

Maryland remains the only state in the nation to receive at least a "B" across all six categories.

This consistent, continued success is thanks to the work going on in our schools each and every day.

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Maryland has gained 151 new Nationally Board Certified Teachers. The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) announced last month that it has now certified 2,575 Maryland teachers with the profession's top recognition. This year's total was 9th among states, and Maryland's overall total ranks 13th in the nation.

National Board Certificated Teachers are educators that have reached the very peak of our profession. Successful completion of this rigorous program spotlights educator commitment to improved learning for every student. These teachers deserve our appreciation and admiration for the work they do in Maryland's classrooms.

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Calendar

February 5 – Digital Learning Day

February 11 – Teacher of the Year Day, Annapolis

will develop a method to analyze local school discipline data to measure the disproportionate impact on minority and special education students.

Local boards of education will be required to update their student discipline policies based on the new regulations by the beginning of the 2014-15 school year. The proposed regulations were published in the *Maryland Register* on December 13.

This week's vote represents the culmination of more than four years of study by State Board members, a process that has included unprecedented collaboration with educators, local board members, and other stakeholders. The State Board invited dozens of educators and interested organizations to testify and provide input as part of that process. Board members have been concerned by the number and length of student suspensions, the impact that loss of class time has on academic success and the achievement gap, and the effect that suspensions have on certain student subgroups.

The new regulations can be found at this [link](#).

GRAD RATES UP AGAIN, DROPOUT RATES FALL

More Maryland high school students set a new record for high school graduation in 2013, according to newly released statewide data.

The four-year cohort graduation rate reached 84.97 percent for the class of 2013 - students who entered school in the fall of 2009 - compared to 83.57 percent for the class of 2012. That represents a remarkable 1.4 percentage point increase in the graduation rate in just one year. At the same time, the cohort dropout rate fell by nearly a full percentage point to 9.36, the lowest on record.

"Working together, we've made the better choice to invest in our schools because a quality education is a ladder to success," said Governor Martin O'Malley. "Today's data shows once again that we're getting results: our high school students are graduating at a higher rate now than ever before, and that success crosses racial and economic lines. More graduates mean a stronger economic future for all Maryland families."

State Superintendent of Schools Lillian M. Lowery said graduation sets the cornerstone for a student's

February 25 – Maryland State Board of Education Meeting, Baltimore



VIDEO HIGHLIGHTS

Six Maryland Public Schools Named State Blue Ribbon Honorees

December 11, 2013

Maryland proudly announces six new Blue Ribbon Schools for the 2013-14 school year. All are high achievers in Reading and Mathematics, and many serve a significant number of disadvantaged students.

In the News

Maryland Adopts New School Discipline Regulations
Washington Post

Editorial: Keeping Students in School
Baltimore Sun

Graduation Rates Rise in Maryland
Washington Post

Op-Ed: Tell the Truth About the Achievement Gap, by U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan
Washington Post

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“Maryland is focused on preparing our graduates for college and career success. That cannot take place without a high school diploma,” Dr. Lowery said. “While we will not be satisfied until all students graduate, we are pleased that these numbers continue to improve. Our schools and our students are traveling along the right path.”

The trend line for Maryland’s statewide graduation rate has been positive. Under a change in federal rules, high school graduation numbers are calculated in what is commonly called the “cohort rate.” The four-year adjusted cohort rate is the number of students who graduate with a regular high school diploma divided by the number of students who form the adjusted cohort for the graduating class. For any given cohort, students who are entering 9th grade for the first time form a cohort that is later “adjusted” by adding students who transfer in during the succeeding years, and subtracting those who transfer out.

This year’s data shows across-the-board improvement for the class of 2013. For example, the graduation rate for Hispanic students jumped more than 2.5 percentage points between 2012 and 2013, from 72.51 percent to 75.08 percent. In addition:

- African American student graduation jumped from 76.50 percent in 2012 to 78.26 percent.
- Asian student graduation increased from 93.44 percent to 95 percent.
- White student graduation improved from 90.49 percent to 91.11 percent.
- Special education student graduation jumped by more than 2.5 percentage points - from 57.41 percent to 60.03 percent.
- The rate for students receiving free or reduced-price meals increased by nearly a percentage point, from 74.87 percent to 75.81 percent.

The four-year cohort graduation rate stood at 80.31 for the class of 2009 - the first year the cohort was calculated in Maryland. Since that time, graduation rates have improved by nearly 5 percentage points.

As the graduation rate has risen, the dropout rate has declined. It stood at 13.78 percent in 2009 and has dropped more than 4.5 points since that time. The 9.36 rate for the 2013 cohort marks the first time the rate has fallen below 10 percent.

The new graduation data will be available today on Maryland's Report Card website, www.MdReportCard.org. A video tutorial on the cohort graduation rate is available at this [link](#).

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